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A Corpsman Family (Home) Delivery

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By Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Chad Belmont

I've been trained to react with confidence and be calm in this type of situation, even though I had nev
my own.

My wife Brittany and I had planed to welcome our new born at home with the assistance of a mid-wife, but when our baby decided to arrive earlier than anticipated, I knew what to do; don't panic, stay focused and rely on my training.

And so this past summer I had the good fortune of assisting my wife Brittany with the birth of our child Linden James Belmont – eight pounds, 11 ounces, 21 inches long, at our home in East Bremerton, Wash.

I've been trained to react with confidence and be calm in this type of situation, even though I had never delivered a baby, especially my own.

Falling back on my training is second nature, such as checking breathing, circulation, blood flow, and responding to the emergency medical situation. I was more than prepared. I have Fleet Marine Force specialty skills and a Wounded Warrior Battalion corpsmen background.

Now don't get me wrong I definitely don't recommend having an un-assisted home-birth and am truly grateful that nothing went wrong. There weren't any pre-delivery monitoring

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devices for the baby or mommy. A very different outcome could have occurred.

According to Brittany, "The birth was one of the most incredible, amazing, unbelievable, experiences of my life, of both of our lives."

Earlier that morning Brittany woke to a contraction that made her need to steady herself, and apply breathing techniques to get through it. She said to me, "that was weird." I took it as a possible hint that today might be the day.

She assured me that it was not going happen because it was still a week before her due-date, and the contraction felt like a Braxton Hicks, one of numerous false contractions since the first day of her second trimester.

According to her, Braxton Hicks come and go as they please, sometimes keeping rhythm, sometimes making it difficult to breathe, which she learned to ignore. She would say, "They don't bother me, I don't bother them."

Although the majority of my training has been specifically focused on combat-related medical and operational services, I have corpsmen training devoted to the birthing process.

Because I was assigned to night-duty at the time I went back to sleep. Meanwhile Brittany and her mother after laying our first born, Rowan, almost age two, for his mid-morning nap, went on several errands. When she returned she joined Rowan for a nap. She felt exhausted. In the last two hours she had suffered through five – increasingly painful – contractions.

After an hour nap, her contractions became stronger, but she still thought that she and her mom could head to the mall to do some shopping. When her mom saw Brittany have a few more contractions getting closer together she suggested they contact the midwife.

Brittany told the midwife she thought she might be in labor, but didn't believe so because she though the labor pain would be more intense.

The midwife thought she was and said to call back if her condition progressed. As soon as Brittany hung up, she had multiple contractions three to five minutes apart, but she continued getting ready for the mall. A contraction made her crouch over, grab the bathroom counter, breathing hard, groaning, and cringing through the pain.

She then accepted that she was in labor. She immediately called the midwife back. The midwife said she'd be there, but was two hours away. Brittany then woke me up. We immediately began preparing by cleaning up the house and bringing out everything necessary for the home-birth.

The midwife would bring emergency medicine. We had the things necessary to keep the birth mess-free and the baby warm. The exertion however proved too much for Brittany and after six contractions, I helped her into bed, but she couldn't get comfortable. To relax she decided to take a hot bath.

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Britanny's recovery has been surprisingly easy. According to her everything feels normal. She's full of energy and thinks it's incredibly weird to accept that she just gave birth.

In the tub she had four contractions, each more pronounced than the other, the third culminated with her letting out a meaningful, drawn out 'ooouuuweyyy,' the exact same sound she used when Rowan was ready to be delivered.

"Don't say ouwey yet! The midwife isn't here," I told her. Well aware that the baby could be coming, which he was.

The fourth contraction had Brittany bending her head down towards her chest and letting out a powerful growl, which she described as, 'much like the sound of an angry bear.' She then saw the look on my face when I realized that our baby was indeed coming and the midwife was still minutes away. I quickly dialed for instructions.

"She's feeling the urge to push," I told the midwife.

"Try to get her to breathe through them. I'm 10 minutes away! Make her lift her chin up and take short small breaths saying "hee-hee-hee," the midwife said.

Brittany had another contraction. I passed on the mid-wife's instructions.

Brittany got through most of them, continuing with, "hee- hee-h- grrooowwwlll."

I coached her with,"No! No! Lift your chin up! Hee hee hee!

"Grrrrrrrr," said Brittany, pushing without intention.

"She's not doing it right. She keeps pushing," I relayed to the midwife.

The midwife said, "You need to get her out of the tub right now and dry her off. Get her to the bathroom floor at least. Is she out?"

"Yes she is out," I said."She's having another contraction on the floor. She keeps pushing!"

I then brought Brittany back to bed. I put the midwife on speaker phone with her directing me what to do.

I patiently coached Brittany to say "hee-hee-hee" in short small breaths. With each "hee" Brittany would push with all her might.

"Stop! You need to breathe," I exclaimed.

“I can’t Chad! I can’t stop. I have to push,” Brittany said.

When Brittany’s water broke I excitedly informed the midwife of what had happened.

She calmly asked “do you feel or see the head?”

Brittany’s next contraction caused him to crown.

Linden then came out with a blue face because of the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck.

I quickly asked the midwife what to do, “Baby is blue and cord is around his neck,” I explained.

“Okay, get Brittany to lift her legs and push the baby out. Can you unwrap the cord?” said the midwife.

“Yes I can,” Brittany said.

“Push!” I coaxed.

In that next push, out came Linden. His breathing okay, but very blue, especially in the face.

Neither of us knew if this was normal. Because the midwife wasn’t there to assess the situation. She suggested we call 9-1-1.

Brittany cried, fearful thinking her baby wasn’t breathing.

With my baby peacefully in my arms, , I tickled his toes to gently persuade a beautiful cry from him. I rubbed his back with towels, and kept him warm with a heating pad. He slowly turned pink,but his face was not changing color. WE anxiously held our breath. While I frantically searched through our birthing box for a suction bulb to get any remaining fluid out of baby Linden’s airway.

When the paramedics arrived they gave Linden oxygen and transported him and mom to Harrison Medical Center, literally right next door to Naval Hospital Bremerton. Linden was strong and healthy and immediately nursed for an hour and a half. It turns out that Linden’s blueness was caused by bruising - light-speed travel through the birth canal. Bouncing around on Brittany’s bones like a pin-ball machine.

Delivering my child in my own home was very exciting. Being a guy it’s tangibly hard to understand y, what my wife went through. I knew I just needed to help guide Linden out. It really wasn’t like an actual emergency and isn’t as outlandish as some might think.

Looking back, it was frightening, but exciting. If we can get through a birthing at home using teamwork and trust, we can go through anything.

Britanny’s recovery has been surprisingly easy. According to her everything feels normal. She’s full of energy and thinks it’s incredibly weird to accept the fact that she gave birth with me assisting with the delivery.

We are so happy!

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Jessica Tounzen
Congrats mom and dad! Linden is a great name, and he is beautiful!